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ABSTRACT

No other educational innovation in the United States has as much potential for saving money for improving education as year-round school programs. The 14-year experience of Jefferson County, Colorado, had generated a cost savings of $87.7 million in bonded indebtedness when the multitrack program was terminated in 1988. District leaders were dismayed by the unreported savings in operating costs that became apparent when all the new schools necessary for operating a traditional 9-month operation were constructed and opened. This paper explains the rationale for the original year-round program, charts savings in construction costs during the experiment, and discusses cost reductions for staff and services that went unacknowledged when preparing the annual budget during the multitrack period. When returning to the 9-month program, many unforeseen problems arose, including a textbook shortage, increased operating costs, a need for unanticipated flat grants, staff phase-in costs, and a contract negotiations impasse due to an increasing budget crisis. No one knows exactly how much was saved by Jefferson County's year-round program, because such records were not kept. Although the year-round education movement is growing throughout the nation, it is unlikely to return to Jefferson County unless the legislature offers some incentive for change. (MLH)

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# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

# FOR

# YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

## *Year-Round Schools From Beginning to End*

Over a 14-year experience with year round schools in a K-12 program, new cost savings were discovered. Educational benefits as well as community attitudes will be discussed: and finally the forces that led to the decline of the program that was the nation's largest.

*Presenter:*

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Jefferson County, Colorado Schools
Broomfield, Colorado

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# *Year-Round Schools From Beginning to End*

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July 1990

No other innovation in education in the United States has as much potential for saving money that can be used for the improvement of education as the operation of schools year-round. The fourteen year experience in Jefferson County Colorado had generated a cost savings of 87.7 million dollars of bonded indebtedness when the multi-track program was terminated in 1988. However it was the unreported savings in operating costs which surprised and dismayed the districts leadership when all the new schools necessary for a traditional 9 month operation were constructed and opened and these costs became evident.

In this large suburban school district of more than one hundred schools west of Denver the teachers in the program indicated that they preferred their year-round schedule by as much as 90 per cent. When a persistent group of citizens from one administrative area who preferred the traditional school calendar organized they were able to persuade the Board to discontinue the year-round program throughout the district. Eight new schools were built to enable the district to return to a nine month school year.

Over a period of fourteen years the Board of Education and Superintendent who adopted the year-round concept had long ago departed from the district. The turn-over in leadership of both board and superintendency had occurred three times in the intervening years. As a result the original purpose and commitments were lost and tax payers had no idea how much in school cost were being saved and what benefits were being attained.

Growth in this suburban county occurred outward from the center like the growth rings of a tree. In the newest ring of growth there were complete communities that sprang up in the early 1980's with large tracts of home construction along with all the roads, shopping centers, recreation district facilities, parks, churches and businesses to make a complete community, but there were no schools. Since the schools in growth areas were scheduled year-round the

children in the newest developments went to schools in an inner ring where the capacity of existing buildings was expanded by 50 per cent through year-round scheduling. The concept 6 plan released 1/3 of the enrollment at a time to intermittent vacations on a pattern that extended through the year.

When the year-round program was launched in Jefferson county in 1974 the primary reason for its implementation was to increase the capacity of schools and save building costs. It was hoped that there might be some educational benefits but that would be a bonus that may or may not come about. No savings in operating costs was expected. In fact there was considerable discussion and concern for the increase in costs that would be required to put on a full staff to keep the buildings open an extra 3 months of the 252 day school year. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1

## Addition of Services To Extend School Operations For One Year-Round School

| Services Required 12 Months | Additional Services 3 summer months | Operating Cost Increase Per Annum |
|---|---|---|
| Special Teachers (Floaters) | | 33% |
| Media Specialists (Floaters) | | 33% |
| Food Services | | 30% |
| Delivery / Services | | 28% |
| Bus Transportation | | 28% |
| Secretaries / Clerks | | 20% |
| Administration | | 8% |
| Custodians | | 5% |
| Coaches / Directors | | 0% |

There was a need for an extra three months of service from art, music and PE teachers in the elementary schools and one-of-a-kind teachers such as band teachers or shop teachers at the secondary level. These were full-time teachers who moved as floaters between 3 schools to relieve permanent teachers for vacations. These floating teachers spent 1/3 of their time in each school they served and their salaries were viewed as an increase in the year-round school budget. Most other support personnel worked a 12 month work year. Since their fringe benefits were already paid in their base salary, there was a savings of as much as 5% for the 3 extra months. Secretaries already worked an extended work year so they were extended only 20%. The principal was the only administrator who required coverage for vacations. Assistant principals and central office administrators merely adjusted their work year to provide continuous services. Custodians who always had a 12 month work year got 2 weeks off for paid vacation. No coaches or extra curricular program directors were added for the 12 month school year, however they spread out their time which reached well into the summer months. Maintenance was always scheduled over a 12 month year before the year round program began and the same was true of other support workers like those in data processing. Of course the wear on buildings and vehicles was increased as the staff attempted to get maximum use from these resources. Although some staff were added in these areas it was difficult to distinguish between additions for up-grading service and additions for the extended year because the number of school plants or vehicles were not increased significantly by the program.

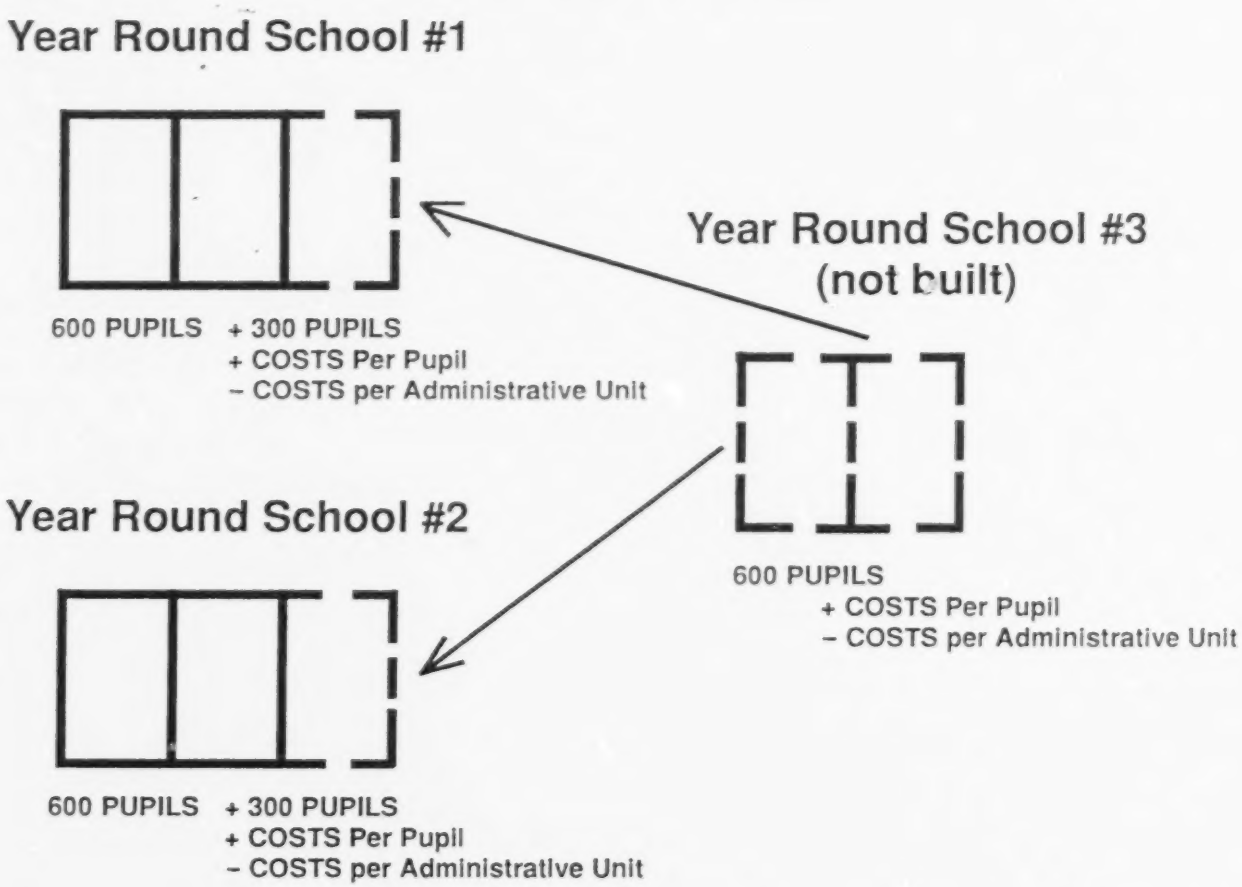
Additional funds for any kind of year-round school support was added only grudgingly. This happened not only because the purpose of the project was to save costs, but because it was difficult to demonstrate the kinds of needs requiring additional support. Since conditions of over crowding were relieved by year-round schools they showed no signs of distress and the administrator of each building or department was inclined to get along without additional budget if it was possible to extend the use of existing resources. Teacher aides, for example, were assigned on a ratio of hours per teacher, but they were in fact assigned one to a work station per department or team or service center. When the math department grew from seven to nine teachers the aide assigned continued to do the total job for the department. When the new

schools were built, however, these kinds of work stations had to be duplicated in every school. The opening of a new school building is always regarded as an event worthy of celebration. It puts school district managers and board members in a generous mood. Leaders in the community are always enthusiastic about a new building and if there are new expenses they are seen merely as the cost of progress.

Principals and teachers became aware over the years that there were savings in operating costs which accrued as they expanded the capacity of their buildings to serve boys and girls in new communities without schools. For each two schools placed on the year-round schedule the district gained the capacity of a third school free and each of these free school capacities or "phantom schools" had an enrollment from neighborhoods now accommodated by the schedule of their existing school rather than by bricks and mortar in the new community. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2

## SAVINGS AND COSTS
## YEAR ROUND SCHOOL


Year Round School #1
600 PUPILS + 300 PUPILS
+ COSTS Per Pupil
– COSTS per Administrative Unit
Year Round School #3
(not built)
600 PUPILS
+ COSTS Per Pupil
– COSTS per Administrative Unit
Year Round School #2
600 PUPILS + 300 PUPILS
+ COSTS Per Pupil
– COSTS per Administrative Unit

At a future date when the "phantom schools" became real buildings they simply relocated an existing school membership into a new cost center where 100% of the staff and services were required for the operation of a complete administrative unit. When the "phantom school" membership came off the year round schedule and moved into a new building they now required not only 100% start up costs but they required 60% to 100% more operating funds in many areas. The new plant became a transportation center, supply center, and service center where the economy of scale had been dissipated to meet the demands of a new institution. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3

## Cost of Reducing Two Year-Round Schools To Open One Nine Month School

| Services Required Nine Months | Source of Cost: YRE Sch #1 3 months | YRE Sch #2 3 months | NEW School 3 months | Operating Cost Increase Per Annum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Special Teachers | | | | 33% |
| Media Specialists | | | | 33% |
| Food Services | | | | 39% |
| Delivery and Services | | | | 43% |
| Transportation | | | | 43% |
| Secretaries / Clerks | | | | 60% |
| Administrators | | | | 84% |
| Custodians | | | | 90% |
| Coaches / Directors | | | | 100% |

During the 14 years that Jefferson County operated multi-track year-round schools these savings were never acknowledged in the preparation of the annual budget. There was never a record of reduction in operating costs per pupil achieved by year-round scheduling. Over the years the tax payers as well as new board members and new superintendents were left unaware of the magnitude of impact year-round scheduling was having on annual budgets.

No mention is made of the cost of utilities in the table above for a reason. It does not involve

personnel. During the economic feasibility study of the pilot year-round schools in Jefferson County the Price-Waterhouse Co. found that in a single year-round school the savings in utilities cost accomplished by increasing the building capacity by 50% would be matched by an increase in utility cost to operate air conditioning through the summer months. When those excess students were moved from the year-round program to the new nine month school, it is reasonable to assume that the summer utility costs would follow them. Therefore, the net increase in the cost of utilities for each new school would be zero although it is difficult to accept that the utility bill for air conditioning equates with the bill for heating in Colorado.

Growth in Jefferson County over the forty years from 1950 to 1989 was met by either the construction of new schools, which was always the preferred choice, or by the alternatives of portable units or year-round scheduling. In the first 20 years bond elections for new construction were almost always successful because districts in Colorado were required to achieve only a simple majority of those voting to gain approval. Before 1970 building new schools was seen as a virtue and provided a means by which communities expressed their support for education and by which superintendents and boards measured their success. After 1970 the attitude of citizens changed and a tax payers revolt set in which greatly limited the Districts ability to construct new schools. The pattern of growth and new construction over forty years was as follows:

**Growth In the Jefferson County School District**

| | 1950–59 | 1960–69 | 1970–79 | 1980–89 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 46,000 | 68,000 | 82,000 | 78,000 |
| **Existing Schools** | 25 | 53 | 87 | 89 |
| **New Schools** | 28 | 40 | 25 | 18 |

During the decade of the 1980's the District followed a policy of building new schools while overall enrollment was declining. Although some schools were closed, to compensate for the loss in revenue suffered from lower enrollments, no surplus was generated sufficient to cushion the impact of opening 18 new operating cost centers.

Financial problems were compounded by a coincident action taken by the state legislature. An unexplained shortage of text books began to appear in schools during this time which came to the attention of local representatives in the legislature. Unknown to the Board, year-round school principals and teacher avoided purchasing books for their total membership since only two-thirds of their pupils were present in school at a time. They were recycling these funds into other kinds of instructional supplies for enrichment of instruction. When areas of the District reverted to a single track nine month operation there was a shortage of books because every child needed books at the same time. In 1988 a measure was passed in the state legislature which limited the freedom local districts had in the expenditure of state funds to support schools. They ear-marked existing funds for instructional supply which doubled the amount specified for text books on a per pupil basis but no new revenue was provided. This restriction greatly limited the latitude Jefferson County had in using state funds to cover increased costs in staff and services or capital reserve.

On August 11, 1988 the Jefferson County Schools terminated the multi-track year-round school program. The phase-out of the last 14 elementary schools, 4 junior high schools and 2 senior high schools was completed and their enrollments above capacity were moved into newly constructed buildings. Six new elementary schools and two new high schools were completed. The high schools were expanded to four year institutions in order to take the ninth grade enrollments from the junior highs and reduce their size. During the discussions of the 1989 budget proposals the superintendent requested the Board not to open the last high school on schedule because it would increase the next years operating budget too much but the Board refused since the structure was nearly complete. This ended 14 years of operations under a calendar where buildings had been open 252 days of the year. The rated capacities of the year-round schools involved were reduced by 50% as they reverted to nine month schedules. (See Table I)

The budget discussions in 1988 began to reveal some surprising effects the opening of the new schools would have on the cost of the next years operations. The Budget Director said that he believed "the year-round schools had costs which would offset the costs of operating traditional year schools". The common opinion among administrators and board members was that the operating budget per enrollment would not change. When the existing membership of pupils was moved from a year- round school where they had been accommodated by year-round scheduling into a newly constructed school on a nine month calendar the costs went up dramatically. The superintendent stated later that he discovered each of the new elementary schools had an average per annum increase in operating budget for the existing enrollment of $260,000. For the high schools the increase was $1,000,000 and for the junior highs it was $700,000.

There were other unanticipated costs as well. Flat grants, according to the superintendent, of $30,000 to $50,000 had to be awarded to each of the new schools to satisfy needs not covered In routine allocations. The new facilities needed materials not on established lists. Special students had special needs to be satisfied. Since teachers could not strip the sending schools of materials accumulated over the years they needed some funds to cover discretionary needs of a new school and new student body. There were also phase-in costs.

There was a one time phase-in cost to provide a principal and skeleton staff to organize the new school opening. In January of the year before opening an elementary school a staff of one principal, one secretary, one librarian, and three classroom teachers was provided at a cost of more than $200,000 per school. At the high school level the principal and two secretaries came on duty a full year before opening the high school. In January they brought in an additional core of personnel including a counselor and five teachers to organize the program of studies, order instructional supplies and books and assist with staffing needs. They also started a school parent support group to function as a PTA. There was counseling for Special Education and other types of special needs pupils. Health records and academic records from sending schools had to be assembled. High Schools had more extensive work to do in registering pupils and building the master schedule. Principals had to select the remainder of their staff. This was complicated by union mandates which dictated in part where staff would come from and what

rights teachers had in claiming new school positions. A per pupil allocation of the Instructional Supply Budget and Text Book budget went with each student to the new school. Where text book shortages existed because of the economy of year-round scheduling negotiations had to be done between sending and receiving schools.

The proposed operating budget to become effective in January 1989 was released to the press on October 2, 1988. The planners had encountered a 9.1 million dollar over-run in anticipated costs and were compelled to make drastic cuts in services. When the Denver Post on October 5 came out with the headline "Jeffco may cut 542 jobs" the community was shocked. This reduction in force would impose limitations on services in all sections of the District and affect all employee groups. As employees feared for their jobs and parents feared for the quality of education a panic atmosphere set in.

At the time these events were happening teacher contract negotiations were under way with the current contract due to expire December 31. The Jefferson County Education Association had declared an impasse in negotiations over disputes concerning long-promised salary increases. Also there was pressure for school reforms which administrators said they could not carry out under present contract restrictions. When citizens and members of the press asked for reasons why the budget crisis had occurred some Board members made the mistake of placing the blame on teachers for asking for a salary increase. The leadership of the teachers association became enraged.

The Teachers Association called a meeting on October 30, 1988 of their membership. This became a rally to express their indignation over the Board position on the budget crisis. The teachers organized a plan of action to defeat all incumbents on the Board running for office at the next election. Immediately after this two board members announced they would not run for re-election and the third member was defeated at the polls.

Perhaps the greatest mistake made by the district was not keeping records of dollars saved over the years the year-round program was in operation. Any time an enterprise reduces costs

through modifications of program which deviate markedly from the norm it is a good practice to keep a record of savings in funds made available by the deviation. When at a future date the managers consider returning to traditional practice, planners need to know precisely how much the change will cost. In year-round scheduling school managers can increase the availability of revenue through cost reduction, cost avoidance and cost deferral. When any one of these practices is discontinued it is essential that figures be available to show decision makers the impact of their actions. For this reason it is appropriate to maintain a section of the annual budget document which reports activities that save costs and the disposition of funds gained through these modifications. (See Table 2)

No one knows exactly how much was saved by the Jefferson County School District during the years the year-round program was in effect. We know that 87.7 million dollars were spent in bonded indebtedness and 20 million dollars were spent from the annual capital reserve budget for new construction and repairs. However the more important savings in the long run was the $3,560,000 in operating cost saved per annum on the last 20 year-round schools. If these funds had been identified and paid to teachers in the year-round schools as extra performance pay to conduct remedial and enrichment instruction during intersessions it would have made a great contribution to the educational achievement of boys and girls in these schools. Moreover, there could have been enough money available to pay each of the 900 teachers in the year-round schools an additional $4,000.00 per year to teach the intersessions. That would have been a 14% increase in salary. Unfortunately this opportunity has been lost and although the year-round education movement is growing throughout the nation it is not likely to return to Jefferson County in the future unless the legislature offers some incentive for change.

## Jefferson County Schools
## Transition From Year–Round to Nine Month Schools

| Year–Round School | New School | Opened Year–Round | Opened Nine Month | Enrollment 1988–89 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorow | | 1977 | 1987 | 755 |
| Columbine | | 1977 | 1987 | 573 |
| | Coronado | | 1987 | 655 |
| Dutch Creek | | 1977 | 1987 | 755 |
| Leawood | | 1974 | 1987 | 664 |
| | Westridge | | 1987 | 738 |
| Normandy | | 1974 | 1987 | 647 |
| Shaffer | | 1980 | 1987 | 793 |
| | Ute Meadows | | 1987 | 820 |
| Stony Creek | | 1984 | 1987 | 748 |
| | Governors Ranch | | 1987 | 519 |
| Juchem | | 1977 | 1988 | 750 |
| Parr | | 1974 | 1987 | 285 |
| Little | | 1974 | 1988 | 458 |
| | Adams | | 1988 | 564 |
| Warder | | 1977 | 1988 | 522 |
| Weber | | 1977 | 1988 | 707 |
| Witt | | 1980 | 1988 | 757 |
| Zerger | | 1977 | 1988 | 696 |
| | Lukas | | 1988 | 706 |
| Deer Crk. Jr. High | | 1982 | 1987 | 1038 |
| Ken Caryl Jr. High | | 1977 | 1987 | 838 |
| Columbine Sr. High | | 1977 | 1987 | 1691 |
| | Chatfield Sr. High | | 1986 | 1774 |
| Moore Jr. High | | 1980 | 1988 | 840 |
| Mandalay Jr. High | | 1984 | 1988 | 615 |
| Pomona Sr. High | | 1977 | 1988 | 1932 |
| | Standley Lake Sr. High | | 1988 | 988 |

Table 2

# Jefferson County Schools

## Cost of Discontinuing Year–Round Schools

### Construction Costs

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonded Indebtedness — (eight new schools) | $ 87,700,000 |
| Capital Reserve For New Construction | 20,000,000 |

### Operating Cost Increase Per Annum

| | 1986–87 | 1987–88 | 1988–89 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Six Elementary Schools | | 1,040,000 | 1,560,000 | |
| Two High Schools | 1,000,00 | 1,000,000 | 2,000,000 | |
| | | | | $ 6,600,000 |

### Flat Grants To New Schools

| | |
|---|---|
| Instructional Supply (six elementary schools) | $ 180,000 |
| Instructional Supply (two high schools) | $ 100,000 |
| Phase–In Costs (eight schools) | $ 1,600,000 |
| Total Cost Through Sept. 1989 | $116,180,000 |